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# Joint Policy on Occupational Education

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Title IX, or handicap, in compliance with section 504.

Joint  
Policy on  
Occupational  
Education





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## I. POLICY PURPOSE

The original *Joint Policy on Occupational Education* was issued by the Massachusetts Board of Education and the Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges in 1977. It defined the roles and responsibilities relating to occupational education of the Board of Education, the Board of Regional Community Colleges, and the Board of Higher Education. In 1980, higher education in the Commonwealth was reorganized under a Board of Regents of Higher Education. The Board of Regents assumed the statutory responsibilities formerly invested in the Boards of Higher Education, Regional Community Colleges, State Colleges, and Universities. Subsequently, federal employment and training legislation and vocational education legislation also were revised.

In view of the reorganization of higher education, the changes in federal legislation, and the desirability of advancing interagency cooperation in postsecondary education, both Boards agreed to review and update the Joint Policy and to collaborate periodically as revisions are needed.

The Board of Education and the Board of Regents of Higher Education each have statutory responsibilities related to providing occupational education opportunities for citizens of the Commonwealth. The Board of Education is the State Board of Vocational Education under state and federal law. As such, it is responsible for coordination of policy development for vocational education, for preparation of the State Plan for Vocational Education, for approval of Chapter 74 postgraduate programs for high school graduates and adults offered by public school districts, and for administering federal and state vocational education funds available for secondary programs and for postsecondary programs offered by local school districts and community colleges.

Regional community colleges in Massachusetts are governed by the Board of Regents of Higher Education. These colleges provide postsecondary occupational education at the certificate and associate degree levels.

Both Boards are committed to extending and improving occupational education in the Commonwealth, and to planning and implementing postsecondary programs of occupational education with mutual collaboration and cooperation.

This Joint Policy on Occupational Education is intended to give direction to planning for collaboration and cooperation by identifying important areas of agreement between the two Boards regarding occupational education. It is through such joint efforts of the two Boards that the Commonwealth's statutory commitment to lay governance of education at all levels can be fulfilled in the area of postsecondary occupational education.

## II. POSTSECONDARY OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION: DEFINITIONS, RELATED STATUTES, AND BOARD POLICIES

Occupational education is an essential and integral part of all education. It should provide students with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to determine and achieve fulfilling career goals. More specifically, occupational education programs should be designed so that students acquire:

- The ability to communicate clearly;
- The ability to do mathematical computations accurately;
- The ability to apply logical thinking and analysis to problem solving;
- The ability to work with others to accomplish tasks;
- An understanding of their own talents and interests;
- An understanding of the conditions, requirements, and benefits of productive employment; and
- A general education and the specialized skills needed for employability in a changing economy that will demand transferable skills.

Occupational education, thus defined, includes the entire range of career programs and of vocational education programs that traditionally prepare students for immediate employment. Occupational education prepares students for productive and rewarding employment now and in the future, without precluding career development or further formal education.

To be considered “postsecondary,” occupational programs must (a) have a clear occupational objective, (b) be offered to students who have graduated from secondary schools or who have obtained equivalency certificates, and (c) be conducted at a level and pace appropriate for post high school work in grades 13 and 14.

The following govern the awarding of credit.

As established by statute:

- Associate Degree in Arts or Science—awarded by the Board of Regents.
- Associate Degree in Applied Science—awarded by the Board of Regents. This degree, with prior approval from the Board of Regents, also can be awarded for collaborative programs of postsecondary occupational education between higher education institutions and independent or regional vocational technical high schools, county agricultural schools, or comprehensive high schools.
- Certificate—awarded by the Board of Regents, regional vocational and independent technical high schools, or comprehensive high schools (with approval of the Division of Occupational Education) for one or two-year postsecondary occupational education programs.

As established by policy of the Board of Regents of Higher Education:

- Credits may be awarded through challenge examinations by the Board of Regents to recognize demonstrated skills acquired through experience, apprenticeship, or secondary programs of occupational education in independent or regional vocational technical high schools, county agricultural schools, or comprehensive high schools.
- Credits and course waivers may be awarded through negotiated transfer agreements between schools and colleges.



## **A. POLICY OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

Both Boards subscribe to a policy of nondiscrimination with respect to oversight and administrative responsibilities for vocational education grants and programs.

Neither will require, approve of, or engage in any unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, or handicap in the provision of services, benefits, or funds during administration of grants or programs. The Boards will seek to ensure that no unlawful adverse impact will occur in grant or program operation on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, or handicap.

As the state agencies responsible for grant and program oversight, they will assign staff to develop and implement monitoring systems and related procedures for assuring recipient and subrecipient compliance with the Boards' Policy on Nondiscrimination in Vocational Education Programs. Such monitoring systems and procedures shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Review and approval of all recipient and subrecipient planned measures for eliminating discrimination and denial of services on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, and handicap.
2. Review and approval of all recipients' and subrecipients' planned measures for improving access to the programs and activities, for minority, female, limited-English proficient, and handicapped persons.
3. Collection and analysis of data from recipients and subrecipients on race, gender, limited-English proficiency, and disability of participants.
4. Development and implementation of regular periodic compliance reports to be prepared by recipients and subrecipients.
5. Recommendation of corrective steps to be taken by recipients and subrecipients to eliminate potential and actual discriminatory practices or impact, and to improve program accessibility.
6. Provision of appropriate technical assistance to recipients and subrecipients regarding elimination of discrimination.
7. Provision of regular periodic reports by the Board of Regents to the Department of Education to be forwarded with the Department's reports to the U.S. Office for Civil Rights regarding the status of compliance of the Boards and respective recipients and subrecipients with the Policy on Nondiscrimination and its related procedures.

### III. GOALS FOR OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

Both Boards have adopted educational goals relating to occupational education. Included in these goals statements are the following:

#### A. BOARD OF EDUCATION

1. A greater number of youths and adults will receive occupational education, with special emphasis on those presently unserved or underserved.
2. Access to vocational education (trade, technical and occupational fields requiring specialized skills for entry) will be increased for minority, handicapped, limited-English proficient, and female students.
3. Guidance and information services will be strengthened to improve student decisions on careers.
4. Youths and adults will be provided with more diversified occupational education options.
5. Vocational education programs will be made more relevant to student needs through effective use of labor market information.
6. Occupational education will continue to be an integrated part of the overall curriculum and instructional process.

#### B. BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

1. To provide the kind of learning environment that will challenge the individual student to the continuing discovery and development of his or her intellectual, occupational, emotional, ethical-social, recreational, and civic interests throughout life.
2. To develop the quantity, quality, and work orientation of program offerings which will meet the varied and changing needs of a diverse student body.
3. To cooperate with government, industry, business, and service agencies in the provision of educational services to assist in solving problems related to the development of the Commonwealth's economy and its human and natural resources.
4. To provide associate degree programs which prepare individuals for para-professional, technical, and service occupations. To provide certificate programs in specialized career and vocational areas.

## **C. FEDERAL GOALS FOR OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION**

The federal government provides direction for vocational education programs through legislation and appropriations to the states. Public Law 98-524, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, enacted in 1984, provides funding for programs targeted to serve people who most need occupational education. Both Boards have responsibilities to ensure that programs operated with federal funds meet the intent and requirements of the legislation. The purposes of the act, as stated in Section 2, are to:

- (1) Assist the states to expand, improve, modernize, and develop quality vocational education programs in order to meet the needs of the nation's existing and future work force for marketable skills and to improve productivity and promote economic growth.
- (2) Assure that individuals who are inadequately served under vocational education programs are assured access to quality vocational education programs, especially individuals who are disadvantaged, who are handicapped, men and women who are in need of training and retraining, individuals who are single parents or homemakers, individuals with limited English proficiency, and individuals who are incarcerated in correctional institutions.
- (3) Promote greater cooperation between public agencies and the private sector in preparing individuals for employment, in promoting the quality of vocational education in the states, and in making the vocational system more responsive to the labor market in the states.
- (4) Improve the academic foundations of vocational students and to aid in the application of newer technologies (including the use of computers) in terms of employment or occupational goals.
- (5) Provide vocational education services to train, retrain, and upgrade employed and unemployed workers in new skills for which there is a demand in that state or employment market.
- (6) Assist the most economically depressed areas of a state to raise employment and occupational competencies of its citizens.
- (7) Assist the state to utilize a full range of supportive services, special programs, and guidance counseling and placement to achieve the basic purposes of this act.
- (8) Improve the effectiveness of consumer and homemaking education and to reduce the limiting effects of sex-role stereotyping on occupations, job skills, levels of competency, and careers.



## IV. JOINT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

### A. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

It is the joint policy of the Board of Education and the Board of Regents to support and promote the efficient use of resources for postsecondary occupational programs throughout the Commonwealth and to coordinate planning for federally funded occupational education programs in community colleges. Therefore, each Board will designate staff members to work together in the following areas:

1. **Planning.** Senior level staff of both Boards will meet at the initiation of each federal grant planning cycle to discuss postsecondary planning initiatives and to review and recommend guidelines to be sent to the colleges for occupational education grant projects. By collaborating in Request for Proposal development in the early phases of the grants process, the two agencies will provide the colleges with consistent direction and will thereby facilitate the proposal development and review process significantly.
2. **Proposal Review.** Designated staff will coordinate review of all grant proposals from community colleges for federal funds under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act and other funds administered by the Board of Education. No grant proposal will be sent to the Board of Education for approval until so recommended by Board of Regents staff. The aim of this agreement is to ensure that the planning and funding of postsecondary occupational education in community colleges is consistent with and supportive of this Joint Policy and other policies of the Board of Regents.
3. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Technical Assistance.** Both Boards recognize that the Board of Regents has responsibility for program content and quality in all of its postsecondary occupational education programs and that the Board of Education has responsibility for assuring that all programs funded under the Vocational Education Act comply with the law and regulations. In addition, both Boards are committed to assuring compliance with U.S. Office for Civil Rights *Vocational Education Programs Guidelines for Eliminating Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of Race, Color, National Origin, Sex and Handicap*.

Board of Regents and college staff will monitor compliance with U.S. Office for Civil Rights guidelines and will supply the Department of Education's Division of Occupational Education with data necessary for the Department's civil rights compliance report to the U.S. Office for Civil Rights, as set forth in a Memorandum of Agreement between the two Boards on implementation of U.S. Office for Civil Rights Vocational Education Act Guidelines.

Staff of both Boards will develop joint monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance procedures for college-level grant funded projects. Staff of both Boards will conduct monitoring visits as required by the Perkins Act.



4. **Data Collection.** The Boards agree to work together to develop and improve data collection methods for occupational programs at the collegiate level. In order to meet federal data reporting requirements and to facilitate comprehensive statewide planning and evaluation of vocational education programs and services, the Boards require detailed information from the community colleges. Examples include data on enrollments, completers, leavers, placement and follow up, and on types of students served by race, sex, limited-English proficiency, place of residence, and financial need. The Board of Education reserves the right to withhold federal funds from any institution that has not submitted timely and accurate data which is required to carry out the mandates of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act (relating to State Plan development, allocations to eligible recipients, and fiscal accountability) and to comply with U.S. Office for Civil Rights requirements.
5. **Reporting.** College staff will submit progress reports and final reports for projects funded under the Vocational Education Act to Department of Education staff who will make them available for review by Board of Regents staff. Failure to report satisfactorily may result in discontinuance of funding.
6. **Coordination, Collaboration, and Articulation.** The Board of Education and the Board of Regents will work to expand coordination, collaboration, and articulation activities between the colleges and technical institutes, vocational schools, county agricultural schools, and comprehensive high schools.

The Boards recognize that some community colleges and some individual school districts have entered into individual collaborative arrangements which serve students well, use resources efficiently and effectively, and maintain high standards of program integrity.

The Boards will require the further development of statewide comprehensive efforts toward secondary/postsecondary program articulation and the coordinated use of existing facilities and equipment for program delivery. These relationships may include advanced placement compacts, advanced credit compacts, certificate and degree options, the Governor's school/college collaborative initiatives, joint curriculum development, joint program delivery, preservice and inservice staff training, remediation programs, and other activities.

Both Boards support, as a matter of policy, the concept of student-centered coordination, collaboration, and articulation arrangements. Proposed agreements should be evaluated primarily in terms of potential benefits to students that can be achieved with efficient use of equipment and other resources while maintaining or improving program quality.

## **B. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Both Boards support the state planning mechanism contained in the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 as an effective means of expanding involvement and consultation in the development of the State Plan for Vocational Education in Massachusetts.
2. The Boards welcome collaboration with the Governor's Executive Office of Educational Affairs in the area of interagency cooperation at the state level.
3. The Boards will collaborate with the State Council on Vocational Education in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities and will work cooperatively with the council in its function of recommending policy that will strengthen vocational education in the state.
4. The Boards support collaborative efforts with the Executive Office of Economic Affairs in occupational education and training and support the expansion of efforts toward greater coordination of state plans required for federal funding.
5. The Boards support information sharing and program planning between appropriate personnel in school districts and community colleges and Private Industry Council/Service Delivery Area officials. The Boards require that Local Plans for Vocational Education and proposals for federal Vocational Education Act funds be made available to local planning agencies under the Job Training Partnership Act. The Boards also recommend that all PIC/SDA officials share their plans with appropriate vocational school and community college officials in their respective areas.
6. The Boards encourage information sharing with appropriate agencies such as the Bay State Skills Corporation, the Division of Employment Security, the Department of Public Welfare, and the Department of Labor and Industries.
7. The Boards also encourage communication with licensing boards, accreditation agencies, trade associations, unions, employers, and other organizations that are a major influence on occupational education programming.
8. The Boards strongly endorse the use of vocational schools, community colleges, and approved apprenticeship programs as primary providers of job training. The boards urge the adoption of fiscal and program practices that eliminate unnecessary duplication of existing and available resources.

## V. FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR POSTSECONDARY OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

Both Boards recognize the following as important to the development of high quality occupational education in Massachusetts:

- Access
- Guidance
- Support Services
- Community Resources
- Economic Development
- Continuing Education and Community Service
- Teacher Training.

### A. ACCESS

The Board of Education and The Board of Regents of Higher Education jointly reaffirm their mutual commitment to expanding access to all educational programs, including occupational education, for those citizens of the Commonwealth who are underrepresented in publicly supported postsecondary education. The Boards recognize their responsibilities under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX, and Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 622, which guarantee important educational rights of access.

In April 1986, the Board of Education developed and approved a substantial commitment to providing opportunities for all adults in the Commonwealth to achieve basic literacy. The Board will provide leadership in structuring a coordinated system of service delivery for adult education with other state agencies that have related interests and responsibilities. The Board of Education will keep the Board of Regents informed of activities to be undertaken in adult literacy, and representatives of the Board of Regents will be included on all appropriate task forces. Both Boards endorse the importance of this undertaking.

The Board of Regents of Higher Education in its Admissions Policy (November, 1976) and the Board of Education in its Policy on Occupational Education (March, 1976) identified minority, bilingual, handicapped, and female students as underrepresented in occupational education. The types of students in programs of occupational education in each community college, as a matter of policy, should reflect the diversity of the college's service area as defined in the Admissions Policy. Total statewide enrollments in occupational education for the regional community college system should reflect the diversity of the Commonwealth.

The Board of Regents and the Board of Education will continue to require that programs supported by federal Vocational Education Act funds enroll appropriate numbers of priority populations and will direct staff to review existing guidelines and make recommendations for taking action if target figures are not met.



## B. GUIDANCE

Both Boards recognize the importance of effective counseling to the achievement of equal access and as an aid to all students in preparing for careers which are attainable and fulfilling.

The Board of Education will promote expanded occupational guidance activities in cooperation with regional community colleges, including increased communication with secondary schools regarding the opportunities afforded students of the Commonwealth by the regional community college system, through conferences, joint in-service counselor workshops, and improved dissemination of information. The involvement of business, industry, and labor expertise in assisting students to make informed career decisions is strongly encouraged.

The Boards recognize the need to support and share mechanisms that can provide community college and high school students with reliable data on the job market, regionally and statewide.

## C. SUPPORT SERVICES

Both Boards recognize that substantial support services such as assessment, counseling, and development courses are necessary if individuals from underrepresented populations are to participate successfully in occupational programs. Both Boards will encourage, support, and facilitate the provision of services such as reinforcement programs in communications and computational skills, occupational exploratory programs, and motivational programs.

## D. COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Boards encourage occupational education programs which make use of community resources, and support cooperative education, internships, and the challenge examination system that recognizes the value of learning from on-the-job work experience. Programs of occupational education involving business, industry, and labor should be expanded. Job related experiences should be an integral part of program development wherever appropriate.

Also both Boards wish to take special note of the occupational education support services of community agencies at the postsecondary level. Contracted use of such services from community agencies is encouraged, in accord with appropriate state procedures. Such agencies have been particularly successful in reaching underserved populations and are an asset in expanding access to publicly supported occupational education for postsecondary students.

The Governor's FY'85 and FY'86 initiatives for school/college collaboration have strengthened relations among educational institutions, public agencies, and businesses. These efforts should be maintained to as great an extent as possible after initial funding has been expended.



## **E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Boards recognize the important relationship between the availability of occupational training and the economic vitality of the Commonwealth. Institutions capable of providing occupational education are a resource which should be involved in promoting economic development through educating and training skilled entrants to the work force, and providing retraining programs on a continuing basis.

New initiatives are strongly encouraged to provide short-term post-secondary occupational training programs which will be an attraction to new businesses and to employers already located in Massachusetts. The Boards wish to expand their involvement in and support of economic development. They will continue to work jointly with the Office of Training and Employment Policy, and with the executive offices of Economic Affairs, Labor and Industries, and Human Services to plan, develop, and seek funding for such programs.

## **F. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE**

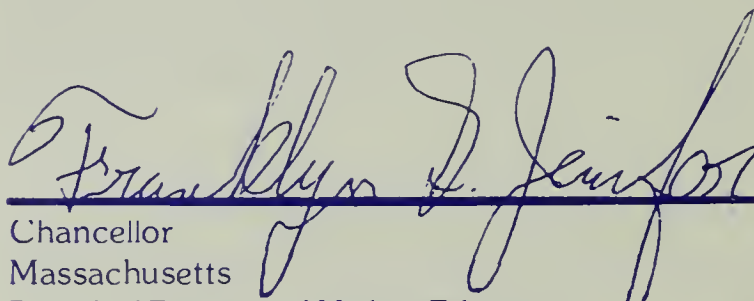
Postsecondary occupational education serves both students and the community. Programs and curriculum should be planned to serve the needs of the area in which the regional community college or other provider of postsecondary programs is located, consistent with statewide goals and objectives of the Boards. The Boards support continuing education as a means for citizens of all ages to expand their learning and to acquire retraining for new career opportunities. Efficient planning requires that coordination be improved so as to avoid inappropriate duplication in continuing education offerings provided for in an area by the community college and public school districts. This can best be done locally, and both Boards will encourage an annual review of coordinated planning between community colleges and public school districts in their primary service area.

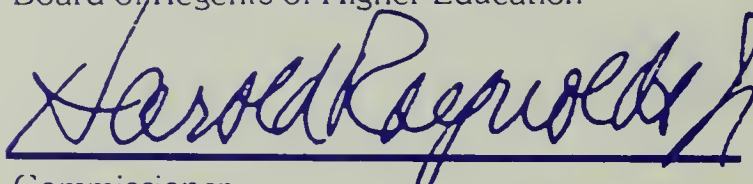
## **G. TEACHER TRAINING**

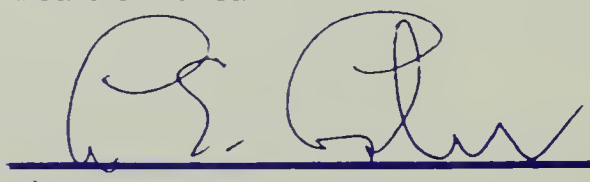
Both Boards recognize that providing quality occupational education requires a commitment to providing training and continuing education for vocational program personnel. The Board of Regents also agrees to seek state funding for programs of teacher training for vocational program personnel through its annual state budget request.


## STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT

The agreements stated in this Joint Policy reflect a revision of formal action taken in 1977. The Board of Education and the Board of Regents of Higher Education have entered into these agreements in order to establish future directions for public postsecondary occupational education and are committed to them as a matter of policy.

  
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Massachusetts  
Board of Regents of Higher Education

  
Commissioner  
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Board of Education

  
Chairman  
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Board of Regents of Higher Education

  
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Board of Education

Date: November 26, 1976



